

**STATEMENT OF
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**BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**AT A HEARING ENTITLED
“PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST:
BUILDING TRUST IN GOVERNMENT
THROUGH CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE”**

**PRESENTED
JUNE 23, 2022**

Introduction

Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Committee -

Thank you for holding today’s hearing and for inviting me here today to discuss this important issue.

Let us begin with the good news. Momentum is building and progress is being made. The Federal government’s institutional capacity for change management has been strengthened by the bipartisan work of this committee. The TALENT Act, the Modernizing Government Technology Act, the Centers of Excellence Act and the 21st Century IDEA Act are reforms which continue to provide direct benefits to the American people. A fact demonstrated as recently as last week’s announcement of dedicated CX funding in the Technology Modernization Fund.

Yet, despite this progress, why does the challenge of improving customer experiences remain pervasive across the Federal government?

Quite simply, we live in a world of exponential change and far too often agencies are making linear progress. Over time, this means that even as progress is made the gap between the public's expectations and their experiences is getting worse. The only way to close this gap is for the pace of improvements to match or exceed the pace of change – agencies must implement solutions capable of scaling to the size of the problem.

Recommendations

Towards that end, I recommend the following initial steps be taken:

- 1) **Efforts should initially focus on High Impact Service Providers**, the 35 Federal programs designated by OMB as having public-facing services with the greatest scale and impact. The prioritization of improvements to High Impact Service Providers in the President's Management Agenda and recent Executive Order are welcome developments that should be supported by this committee.
- 2) **Agencies should leverage commercial technology at scale.** The technology to solve this problem exists, in fact it is largely commoditized across our economy. We do not need to hire Thomas Edison to invent the lightbulb; we simply need to buy them in the marketplace. From robotic process automation, the digitization of citizen-facing forms, the use of electronic signatures, and other standards-compliant SaaS products - proven commercial technologies that provide truly exceptional customer experiences are readily available.
- 3) **CX needs a guaranteed seat at the table. There must be increased accountability within agencies for customer experiences.** Too often, the prioritization of CX improvements within agencies are driven by the ad hoc actions of a single advocate rather than as a core equity empowered by organizational design. I believe this committee should direct agency heads to designate and empower a senior official with CXO responsibilities for every High Impact Service Provider within their agency, with the budget and operational authority to match those responsibilities.
- 4) **Agencies should leverage the authorities they've been given.** Far too many authorities given to agencies by Congress remain underutilized. Specifically, this committee should encourage OMB to issue implementation guidance for the provisions outlined in the 21st Century IDEA Act and to leverage the requirement that agencies comply with the U.S. Web Design System. In all candor, as we have seen with the success of similar efforts in the United Kingdom and various state governments, I believe the proper implementation of this single provision has enormous potential to improve the quality of customer experiences across the government.
- 5) **Quantitative measurement of results.** This committee should explore requirements to collect and publish quantitative metrics of Federal service delivery. While qualitative metrics can provide valuable insights, the direct measurement of customer experiences -

wait times, program backlogs, time to resolution, and other key performance indicators - are essential to meaningfully measuring the net effectiveness of agency efforts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the issue of agency customer experiences may not grab headlines every day, it does impact millions of Americans. Every. Single. Day.

People for whom broken links and poorly implemented webforms equate to sleepless nights and stolen time away from their families. Millions of people who, often in their most vulnerable moments, deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

By leveraging modern technology, our government has the potential to deliver exceptional customer experiences and, in the process, restore the public's faith in our national institutions once again.

Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

Additional Statements

Reinforce CX Improvements at High Impact Service Providers. Building on the bipartisan work of the previous two Administrations, last December President Biden signed the Executive Order Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery, which provided 36 specific customer experience improvement commitments across 17 Federal agencies. Each commitment is oriented around significant life events - i.e., turning 65 and retiring, having a child, applying for a loan, etc. - focused on the High Impact Service Providers (HISP) as determined by OMB Circular A-11 in 2018. Notably, the Administration has set a specific success metric of delivering a post-transaction trust rating of 75% or higher at all HISPs. To the degree that they are aligned with the committee's overall policy objectives, the committee should reinforce these commitments in its discussions with the relevant Federal agencies.

The Need for a Chief Technology Officer. It should be noted that the lack of a Chief Technology Officer within the Office of Science and Technology Policy remains an opportunity to ensure that technical expertise is fully represented in senior-level discussions within the Executive Office of the President. In the previous two Administrations, the CTO was a valuable ally to the Federal CIO and other innovation stakeholders in ensuring these issues had organizational capital. Given that any nomination would likely take time to reach confirmation and we are rapidly approaching the midpoint of the Presidential term of office, I would recommend that the committee inquire as to the Administration's intentions regarding filling this important position.

CX Scorecard and Constructive Oversight. The impact of Congressional oversight should not be underestimated, particularly when aligned with a broader strategy and legislative requirements. For example, while imperfect and occasionally frustrating for agency officials, the FITARA scorecard served as an effective catalyst for change. I would encourage the committee to explore creating a similar, data-driven report structure for the customer experiences provided by High Impact Service Providers.

Restoring the Public's Trust. We all know the feeling, what it's like to be delighted by a customer interaction. Review any list of the most popular, most trusted - and often the most successful - brands in the United States and you will see a list of companies that treat their customers well. Throughout every touchpoint, in ways both large and small, the customer experience is prioritized. It's more than a mere luxury. It's a feeling of respect, it's a feeling of being valued, and it creates trust.

Over the past 90 days, according to Analytics.gov, there have been more than 5 billion visits to the Federal government's various digital properties. How many of those visits have delighted end users? How many of those visits have created trust?

And yet, unlike many of the country's private sector experiences, these visits are often by people for whom the underlying services are not optional. Well-designed, modern, equitable government services strengthen our Nation. It means millions of Veterans receive the benefits they have earned. Entrepreneurs and farmers who secure financing to take risks and create jobs. Mothers and infants who can access critical, life-changing nutrition support. Disaster survivors who can rebuild their homes and their lives without mountains of paperwork.

Restoring the public's trust in our Nation's institutions begins by earning it, one customer experience at a time.

I commend the committee for hosting this important discussion and encourage the committee to continue to focus on this issue.